Trade with ASEAN Countries

668. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to double trade with ASEAN countries;

(b) if so, the strategies adopted therefor;

(c) whether bilateral talks were held with the ASEAN member countries in the matter; and

(d) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (d) Based on the trends in bilateral trade with ASEAN countries and the potential for growth, the bilateral trade between India and ASEAN was expected to increase substantially in the coming years.

In order to give a fillup to our trade with the ASEAN countries, India has become a full dialogue partner with ASEAN engaging these countries in negotiations for promoting cooperation in trade and investment, infrastructure, tourism, science & technology and human resources development sectors. Institutional mechanisms have been established to promote bilateral trade with ASEAN countries which include participation in ASEAN-PMC meeting, ASEAN-Indian Joint Cooperation Committee and the other technical fora. A Working group on Trade & Investment has been established to facilitate trade and investment between India and ASEAN. Bilateral talks have also been held recently with Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar and Philippines under bilateral mechanisms which include Joint Ministerial Committee, Joint Trade Committee, Joint Working Group etc. In these meetings, it has been mutually agreed to take steps to enhance bilateral trade between these countries and India.

Gold and Silver Import

669. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have liberalised further gold and silver imports by creating a fourth window, three canalising agencies and eight banks to enter the retail domestic market; and

(b) if so, what is the fourth window, three canalising agencies and eight banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government have framed a policy for import of Gold and Silver by Agencies authorised by the Reserve Bank of India for sale of Gold and Silver in the domestic market. The rate of duty for gold is Rs. 220/- per 10 gms. and for silver Rs. 500/- per kg. This duty is payable in Indian rupees.

The Agencies are: State Trading Corporation, The Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation, the Handloom and Handicrafts Export Corporation. The Banks are: The State Bank of India, Bank of India, Canara Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Allahabad Bank, Bank of Nova Scotia, Standard Chartered Bank and ABN-Ambro Bank.

Income tax returns filed by Messrs Kunkumam Publications Private Ltd., Chennai

670. SHRI R.K. KUMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state whether Messrs. Kunkumam Publications Pvt. Ltd., Chennai have been filing income tax returns and if so, the details of income returned by them for financial years 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 and the details of advertisement revenue included in their gross income for the above three financial years?